

of the dams which have hitherto prevented the swollen river from flooding the canals and the fields. This is done, and the pent-up waters released on their beneficent mission, in the first half of August.¹ In November, when the inundation has subsided, wheat, barley, and sorghum are sown. The time of harvest varies with the district, falling about a month later in the north than in the south. In Upper or Southern Egypt barley is reaped at the beginning of March, wheat at the beginning of April, and sorghum about the end of that month.²

The events It is natural to suppose that these various events of the of the agricultural year were celebrated by the Egyptian farmer

religious * us year were with some simple religious rites designed to secure the celebrated blessing of the gods upon his labours. These rustic ceremonies he would continue to perform year after year at the same season, while the solemn festivals of the priests continued to shift, with the shifting calendar, from summer through spring to winter, and so backward through autumn to summer. The rites of the husbandman were stable because they rested on direct observation of nature: the rites of the priest were unstable because they were based on a false calculation. Yet many of the priestly festivals may have been nothing but the old rural festivals disguised in the course of ages by the pomp of sacerdotalism and severed, by the error of the calendar, from their roots in the natural cycle of the seasons.

¹ Sir J. Gardiner Wilkinson, *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* to Pliny (*Nat. Hist.* xviii. 60) barley was reaped in Egypt in the sixth month

(London, 1878), ii. 365 sq.; E. W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Siculus*, on the other hand, says (i. 36. 4) that the corn was reaped after four or five months. Perhaps Pliny refers to Lower, and Diodorus to Upper Egypt. Elsewhere mentioned writer says (p. 24) that the dams are commonly cut between the first and sixteenth of July, but apparently he means August. began at the end of March and was completed in May.² Sir J. D. Wilkinson, *op. tit.* ii. 398 sq.; Prof. W. M. Flinders Petrie, cited above, vol. i. p. 231, note ³. According